

REPORT

OF THE

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Dauphin County Medical Society

RELATIVE TO THE INTRODUCTION OF

H O M E O P A T H Y

INTO THE

HARRISBURG HOSPITAL.

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HARRISBURG:

THEO. F. SCHEFFER, PRINTER AND BOOK BINDER,  
1876.

## RESOLUTION.

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WHEREAS, The action of the Dauphin County Medical Society, in endorsing the resignation, in 1873, of the entire medical staff of the Harrisburg Hospital, has been misrepresented, and attributed to motives entirely foreign to those expressed :

AND WHEREAS, In justice to the profession at large and to ourselves, it is desirable that the medical profession should be conversant with the simple facts in reference thereto: Therefore,

*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to draw up and present to this Society a report with the necessary documentary evidence of all the facts connected with the indorsement by the Society of the resignation in 1873 of the medical staff of the Harrisburg Hospital.

# REPORT.

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HARRISBURG, *February 15th, 1876.*

In compliance with your resolution of January 18th, 1876, directing us to collate all the facts relative to the indorsement by the County Society, of the resignation in 1873, of the late Medical Staff of the Harrisburg Hospital, your committee would respectfully submit the following:

On the 4th day of April, 1873, Articles of Incorporation for "The Harrisburg Hospital for the reception and cure of the sick and injured, were granted by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania; through the liberality and enterprise of a few large-hearted and moneyed men the institution was placed on a sound financial basis, a building procured, a series of rules for the guidance of the Managers and the control of the affairs of the Hospital carefully prepared and published. A Medical Staff was elected in accordance with those rules who consented to give gratuitously their services for the benefit of the Hospital, and a meeting of the contributors was called for August 4th, 1873, to dedicate the building to the reception and cure of the sick and injured.

Just prior to that meeting, at an adjourned meeting of the Managers, called to hear the reports of several committees, the following resolution, much to the surprise of the Medical Staff, was adopted by the Board of Managers:

*"Whereas, It has been stated that if Homeopathic medicines be procured, attendance will be furnished gratuitously by a Homeopathic physician: Therefore,*

*"Resolved, That a case of Homeopathic medicines be procured*

*at a cost not exceeding one hundred dollars, so that if any patients wish to be treated under that system it may be done by a physician of that school."*

On the issue thus made, John Curwen, M. D., and George W. Reily, M. D., members of the Board of Managers, after having in vain protested against the adoption of such a resolution, resigned from the Board. At a meeting called to consider the subject, the entire Medical Staff unwilling to compromise their position in the profession, not wishing in the discharge of eleemosynary duties to be hampered by influences adverse to their education, training and practice, and feeling that their usefulness to the patients under their charge would be impaired, appointed a committee of three to wait upon the visiting Managers at the Hospital, protest against the enforcement of the resolution, confer with them as to the possibility of having it rescinded, and in case the protest would not be considered, submit the resignation of the Medical Staff.

The Managers were waited upon, the protest was made and the subject fully discussed, when it was found that the Board intended to adhere to their expressed views, the committee in accordance with their instructions, presented the following resignation of the Medical Staff to the Managers :

"HARRISBURG, PA., August 6, 1873. .

*To the Board of Managers of the Harrisburg Hospital:*

GENTLEMEN: The undersigned respectfully represent, that when we accepted, the respective positions to which you elected us upon the Staff of the Hospital, we did so under the impression that the medical and surgical treatment of its patients would be entrusted entirely to our care as they are in every regular Hospital.

You have seen fit subsequent to our acceptance to pass the following preamble and resolution :

*"Whereas, It has been stated that if Homeopathic medicines*

*be procured, attendance will be furnished gratuitously by a Homeopathic physician: Therefore,*

*Resolved, That a case of Homeopathic medicines be procured at a cost not exceeding one hundred dollars, so that if any patients wish to be treated under that system, it may be done by a physician of that school."*

Whilst we should cheerfully and gratuitously have served the interests of the institution, to the best of our ability as its sole staff, we cannot consent to act in a Hospital wherein it is proposed to sanction a practice so utterly at variance with that in which we have been educated.

We therefore hereby respectfully tender our resignations.

H. O. WITMAN, M. D., *Consulting Physician.*

GEORGE DOCK, M. D., *Consulting Surgeon.*

H. L. ORTH, M. D.,

A. C. RENNINGER, M. D., *Visiting Surgeons.*

JNO. W. HAY, M. D.,

GEO. S. HURSH, M. D., *Visiting Physicians.*

HUGH HAMILTON, M. D.,

JOHN C. HUTTON, M. D., *Dispensary Physicians."*

On the morning of the 7th instant, at a special meeting of the Managers the resignation of the Medical Staff was accepted, and on the evening of the same day at a special meeting of the Society, the action of the Hospital Staff was unanimously endorsed as follows:

"WHEREAS, The Board of Managers of the Harrisburg Hospital, having elected a competent Medical Staff of regular physicians, did by the following resolution passed subsequently to the said election, viz:

*"Whereas, It has been stated that if Homeopathic medicines be procured, attendance will be furnished gratuitously by a Homeopathic physician: Therefore,*

*“Resolved, That a case of Homeopathic medicines be procured at a cost not exceeding one hundred dollars, so that if any patients wish to be treated under that system, it may be done by a physician of that school,”* attempt to introduce into the Hospital a pretended system of medicine: Therefore,

*“Resolved, That we cordially approve of, and endorse, the action of Drs. Curwen and Reily in resigning their positions upon the Board of Managers of said Hospital.*

*“Resolved, That we most cordially approve of, and endorse, the manly and high-toned professional action of the Medical Staff in promptly resigning their positions in said Hospital.*

*“Resolved, That we individually and as a Society, hereby pledge ourselves not to accept any position in said Hospital, unless each and every member of the late Staff be re-elected by the Managers of said Hospital, and all other practice but that of the regular school of medicine be ignored.”*

In the report of the Managers of the Hospital for the year 1874, the resolution of August 4th, 1873, modified as follows, was incorporated in the rules, viz:

*“Should any patient at the time of his or her admission request of the Steward or attending Managers to be treated by a Homeopathic physician, the request shall be granted, and the Steward shall immediately notify such Homeopathic physician of Harrisburg as may agree to serve the Hospital gratuitously for the time being.”—P. 29, Annual Report of Harrisburg Hospital, 1874.*

We have thus given a plain and succinct statement, with documentary evidence annexed, of the facts connected with the endorsement by the Society, of the resignation in 1873 of the Medical Staff of the Hospital.

The impossibility of endorsing even tacitly, a practice in the Hospital based on an “exclusive dogma,” the absurdity of having any professional connection either public or private with Homeopathic practitioners under any conditions or guarantees, and the resignation from the Board of Managers of the medical

men who are conversant with the animus that originated the Homeopathic resolution, furnished ample reasons for the resignation of the Medical Staff.

And the Society would have been derelict in its duty to the Pennsylvania State Medical Society, under whose auspices it was organized, would have failed to carry out the pledges made to the American Medical Association, when accepting for its government the rules of guidance laid down in their published code of Ethics, and to itself, if it had hesitated for one instant to endorse that resignation, based as it was on those convictions of right and duty which should at all times guide each and all of us in our intercourse with our professional brethren.

[Signed,]

H. L. ORTH, M. D.,

JNO. CURWEN, M. D.,

HUGH HAMILTON, M. D.

*Resolved*, That the same committee be instructed to have printed the report just read and send copies to the Pennsylvania State Medical Society and to each and every County Society in the State.

DAUPHIN COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

HARRISBURG, PA., *February 26, 1876.*

We hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy from the minutes of this Society.

[Signed,]

C. A. RAHTER, M. D., *President.*

Attest: HUGH HAMILTON, M. D., *Secretary.*



The annual meeting of The Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania held June 1, 1876, in Philadelphia, unanimously endorsed the action of The Dauphin County Medical Society by adopting the following :

WHEREAS, The Dauphin County Medical Society has endorsed the action of the Surgeons and Physicians in resigning their positions in 1873, on the staff of the Harrisburg Hospital, on account of the introduction of Homœopathic practice.

*Resolved*, That this Society do commend and approve of that action.

*Resolved*, That while approving of their conduct, we cannot too fully endorse the high-toned professional spirit which prompted the medical staff to decline to have any thing to do with an Institution that recognizes any system of practice based upon exclusive dogma.